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SUBJECT: CODEL ENGEL DISCUSSES SECURITY ISSUES WITH  
MEMBERS OF MEXICAN SENATE

11. Unclassified - entire text.

12. Summary: During a February 17 lunch with Mexican Senators, Representative Eliot Engel and members of the House Foreign Affairs Western Hemisphere Sub-committee discussed the growing economic and security challenges facing both the U.S. and Mexico. Chairman Eliot Engel told his Mexican hosts that the U.S. was committed to continue working with Mexico to address security concerns. He expressed his belief that the U.S. needs to redouble its efforts to confront organized crime along the border and pledged to help Presidents Obama and Calderon establish and maintain a strong relationship in the coming months. Hosting the lunch on behalf of the Mexican Senate, leader Gustavo Madero called for closer cooperation between the two countries and expressed his appreciation for the Merida Initiative.

#### Shared Border, Shared Problems

13. In a generally amiable discussion that drew in nearly every lunch participant, Senators and their U.S. guests were frank in describing the challenges and common problems facing both countries. Senator Rodolfo Dorador Perez Gavilan (PAN) noted that Mexico's public security challenges and escalating violence were related to illegal drug use in the U.S., but that Mexico's own domestic consumption of illegal narcotics was increasing as well. Representative Mark Souder emphasized efforts in the U.S. to address consumption through a wide array of education, health and public service programs. Such efforts, he said, are not always appreciated either in the U.S. or abroad. He noted that many programs, not thought to be directly related to demand reduction, include prevention and treatment programs aimed at drug abuse. Total investment in such programs amounts to billions of dollars annually. Senator Rosario Green (PRI), however, still questioned whether enough resources were being devoted, given the dimension of the problem.

#### Arms Trafficking and Money Laundering

14. Senator Green also said that close scrutiny was need to control the flows of arms and money between Mexico and the U.S. Illegal arms trafficking from the U.S., in particular, appears to be a highly organized effort, she opined and pointedly asked her guests why more could not be done to stem the flow of military grade weapons that are making their way to Mexico from the U.S. Chairman Engel said that the U.S. is addressing arms trafficking, and called attention to his recent letter to President Obama urging him to renew enforcement of a ban of imports of assault weapons. Senator

Green also expressed concern about money laundering operations in the U.S. and urged members of the visiting delegation to strengthen U.S. banking regulations to better curb such operations.

#### Poverty and Security

¶15. Senator Mirna Gomez (PRI) opined that poor economic conditions and limited employment opportunities are the root cause of organized crime in Mexico and linked this to current immigration practices. When Mexicans are deported from the U.S. they often have nowhere to turn except joining DTOs, she averred. Mexico's government needs U.S. help, she stated. U.S. Representative Jean Schmidt asked for the two most important steps the U.S. could take. U.S. Representative John Salazar suggested that countries in the hemisphere could increase their cooperation and probed his hosts for suggestions on how Mexico itself could promote economic development. Senator Eloy Cantu Segovia (PRI) responded by saying Mexico and the U.S. need to combine efforts to compete globally, but lamented that the two countries have been unable to create a joint legislative mechanism to improve the trans-border business environment. In May 2007, he noted, the U.S.-Mexico Interparliamentary Group called on the creation of a competitiveness commission, but it has yet to follow through on the commitment. U.S. Representative Hinojosa said education is also key to combatting poverty and suggested expanding teacher and research exchanges between the two countries.

¶16. Both sides concluded the lunch pledging to work more

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closely to address shared economic and security problems.  
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